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Family: Teens still critical 6 weeks after resort poisoning

Associated Press

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By MICHAEL RUBINKAM

Two Delaware teenagers are still in critical condition more than six weeks after they were sickened by a banned pesticide that was sprayed at the Caribbean resort where they were staying, their family said Monday.

Sean and Ryan Esmond and their parents fell ill after an applicator working for Terminix used methyl bromide at the resort in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The teens are hospitalized in Philadelphia. Their father and mother, Stephen Esmond and Theresa Devine, continue to undergo therapy, said the statement, which provided the first update on the family's medical condition in a month.

"The Esmond Family thanks the nation for its outpouring of support and concern for the family's recovery from this unthinkable tragedy of pesticide poisoning during their family vacation," the statement said.

The Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Justice and authorities in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are investigating.

The EPA said in April that its probe had found the toxic pesticide was used at the Sirenusa Condominium Resort in St. John several times in the past, and may have improperly been used in Puerto Rico. The agency banned the chemical for residential use in 1984.

"The family is confident that those responsible will be brought to justice," the Esmonds' statement said.

Stephen Esmond is head of a private middle school in Wilmington, Delaware, and Devine is a dentist in the Philadelphia suburbs. The family had traveled to the Virgin Islands for vacation with several other families from Wilmington's private Tatnall School.

Methyl bromide, an odorless and highly toxic gas, can severely damage the lungs and brain. The chemical was applied to a vacant unit directly beneath the Esmonds' unit at the posh resort overlooking Cruz Bay, according to environmental regulators.

The teenagers' prognosis depends on how long they were exposed and how much they breathed in, said Dr. Reynold Panettieri, deputy director of the Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology at the University of Pennsylvania's medical school.

"The potential for meaningful recovery is still there," Panettieri, who is not involved in the teens' care, told The Associated Press recently. "As you get farther and farther out, the potential for meaningful survival and living independently is going to become less and less likely."

Terminix, the Memphis, Tennessee-based pest-control firm, previously said it is cooperating with investigators and conducting its own internal inquiry. A company spokesman did not immediately return an email seeking comment on what its internal probe has found.

The Virgin Islands' Department of Planning and Natural Resources has suspended the Terminix applicator's license.

Poisoned boys still critical after 'unthinkable tragedy'

The News Journal

Cris Barrish,

May 4, 2015

The Esmond family was poisoned by the banned pesticide methyl bromide at the Sirenusa resort in the Caribbean island of St. John.(Photo: .)

The two teenaged sons of a Tatnall School administrator whose family was poisoned by a banned pesticide during a U.S. Virgin Islands vacation "remain hospitalized in critical condition," their attorney said Monday.

Sean and Ryan Esmond, who are in the ninth and 11th grades, respectively, have been hospitalized in Philadelphia since their family fell ill during their stay at the \$800-a-night Sirenusa resort in St. John.

Meanwhile, their parents, Steve Esmond and Theresa Devine, are out of the hospital and "continue to undergo rehabilitation therapy," attorney James J. Maron said in a news release.

Steve Esmond is head of Tatnall Middle School in Greenville and his wife is a dentist in Broomall, Pa. The boys are popular students and lacrosse players.

The plight of the Wilmington family has received nationwide media attention.

Maron, who called the Esmond family's poisoning an "unthinkable tragedy," added that the family is grateful for support they have received across America and said they are "confident that those responsible will be brought to justice."

The family's poisoning by the pesticide methyl bromide, which was used by employees of Terminix to fumigate the condo below theirs at Sirenusa despite a ban on its indoor use, is being investigated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning & Natural Resources and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Methyl bromide, an odorless fumigant, can be fatal or cause serious central nervous system and respiratory system damage, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Because of the chemical's "acute toxicity," methyl bromide is now banned indoors and permitted only for limited agricultural uses by trained applicators, the EPA said.

Despite the ban, the pesticide was applied at Sirenusa "to deal with indoor bugs," said Judith Enck, administrator for EPA's region 2, which includes the Virgin Islands, a U.S. territory.

Environmental regulators in the Virgin Islands have issued a "stop-use order" against Terminix for using "Meth-O-Gas" indoors at the Sirenusa resort in October and again on March 18, two days before the Esmond family began having seizures and had to be hospitalized.

Peter Tosches, senior vice president for Terminix, has said the the company was conducting an internal investigation and cooperating with investigators.

Esmond Boys Still in Critical Condition after Pesticide Poisoning

VI SOURCE

By Lynda Lohr — May 5, 2015

The two Delaware boys sickened on March 20 after the St. Thomas pesticide company Terminix fumigated a Sirenusa condo unit on St. John remain hospitalized and in critical condition, a Monday press release from Doylestown, Penn.-based communications company working with the law firm representing the parents, Stephen Esmond and Theresa Devine, as well as their children, Sean and Ryan.

According to the press release, the parents continue to undergo rehabilitation therapy.

Members of the vacationing Esmond family suffered seizures and were rushed to Roy L. Schneider Hospital. They were subsequently airlifted to mainland hospitals.

The press release indicates that the Esmond family thanks the nation for its outpouring of support and concern for the family's recovery. It also said that the family is grateful for the work of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the V.I. Planning and Natural Resources Department and the U.S. Justice Department for continuing the investigation. The family is confident that those responsible will be brought to justice.

So far EPA testing confirmed the presence of methyl bromide in the unit occupied by the Esmonds and a lower unit where the pesticide was used in an attempt to eliminate powder post beetles. And DPNR on April 20 suspended the license of Terminix manager Jose Rivera for fumigating the Sirenusa unit with a pesticide banned for that use two days before the Esmond family got sick.

Pesticides containing methyl bromide are allowed only in agriculture use.

In a March 26 notice, DPNR ordered Terminix to stop using the pesticide containing methyl bromide. On April 20, Planning also issued stop-use orders to three St. Croix pesticide companies for issues with a methyl bromide pesticide. They are Oliver Exterminating, Real Tech Pest Control and W.I.C. Pest Control.

Earlier in its investigation, DPNR indicated that the pesticide containing methyl bromide came from Puerto Rico.

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